(a) whether the U.S. Government has made visa rules more stringent this year resulting in delay in admission of the Indian students in American Universities;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the revised visa guidelines would result in prolonged delay of the Indian students in reaching the campus; and

(d) if so, whether the matter has been taken up with the appropriate authorities for corrective action?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) For reasons of security in the context of the events of 11th September, 2001, the U.S. government has begun to implement on a worldwide basis, with effect from 14th July 2003, some changes in the visa application process for all types of non-immigrant visas. Thus, the changes are not specific to India or to student visas. Under the changed visa regime, applicants for all types of non-immigrant visas have to take an appointment for a visa interview at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate except in a few specified cases.

(c) and (d) The government took up the matter with the appropriate authorities. The U.S. authorities have conveyed that their Embassy and Consulates are trying to ensure that the student visa applications are processed before the date the students have to report to their educational institutions in the United States.

Bus service to Lahore

497. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:
SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to re-introduce Delhi-Lahore Bus service which was discontinued some time back;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the response of passengers to this service;

(d) whether it is a fact that Government of Pakistan owes Rs. 25 Lakh to the Delhi Transport Corporation and despite best efforts it has not been possible to recover the amount; and

(e) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) Prime Minister had, on April 18, 2003, extended once again the hand of friendship to Pakistan. In his telephone conversation with Pakistan's Prime Minister on April 28, 2003, Prime Minister had emphasized the importance of economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, people-to-people contacts and civil aviation links for creating a climate conducive to addressing more difficult issues. In this context, Government had on May 26, 2003, approved the resumption of Delhi-Lahore bus service as soon as the details were worked out by the technical authorities of the two countries. A technical team from Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation visited India and a technical level meeting was held between the two countries on June 19-20, 2003 in New Delhi. Subsequently, the bus resumed service from July 11, 2003.

(c) Passengers' response to the resumption of bus service is encouraging.

(d) and (e) After the reconciliation of figures as agreed between Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation during the latter's visit to New Delhi on June 19-20, 2003, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation owes Rs. 19,69,104/- to DTC. During the course of their meeting, PTDC delegation agreed to remit the pending dues shortly. DTC has taken up with PTDC the question of early remittance of the funds.

Global Opinion Against Terrorism

†498. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether being the main promoter of peace in the world, Indian Government have taken any steps to generate world public opinion against the menace of global terrorism;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.